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TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC 0272
INFO RUEHGB/AMEMBASSY BAGHDAD 0087
RUEHBY/AMEMBASSY CANBERRA 1916
RUEHWL/AMEMBASSY WELLINGTON 0032
RHMFISS/HQ USCENTCOM MACDILL AFB FL
RHHMUNA/HQ USPACOM HONOLULU HI
RHEHNSC/NSC WASHDC
RHHJJAA/JICPAC HONOLULU HI
RUEKJCS/SECDEF WASHDC
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C O N F I D E N T I A L SUVA 000020

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FOR PM, NEA, CA, AND EAP

E.O. 12958: DECL: 01/25/2018
TAGS: [PREL](#) [MARR](#) [MOPS](#) [CVIS](#) [IZ](#) [TN](#)
SUBJECT: TONGA REQUIREMENTS FOR IRAQ DEPLOYMENT -- PM
SEVELE SEES BRIGHT FUTURE, ONCE "VISA" ISSUE IS RESOLVED

REF: A. SUVA 018

- [1](#)B. STATE 4865
- [1](#)C. 07 SUVA 452
- [1](#)D. 07 SUVA 442
- [1](#)E. 07 SUVA 435

Classified By: Amb. Dinger. Sec. 1.4 (B,D).

Tonga visa issue is priority one

[1](#)1. (C) Tonga Prime Minister Sevele visited Embassy Suva on Jan. 25 on his way back to Tonga from a visit to Honolulu (see ref A). As requested Ref B, we followed up on his PACOM discussions regarding the possibility of further Tonga Defense Service (TDS) deployments to Iraq. Sevele made clear the "Tonga visa" issue remains a major impediment to future TDS deployments. (See refs A, C, D, and E). He reiterated that some Tongans are expressing concern about why TDS troops are putting their lives on the line in MNFI when the U.S. is not prepared to provide visa services on the ground in Tonga. Ambassador Dinger provided an update and noted issues at play in Washington.

After visa solution, deployment issues are easy

[1](#)2. (C) Ambassador Dinger asked Sevele to set the visa issue aside for the moment and to comment on what legal mechanisms the Tonga Government would need in order to continue contributing to MNFI after the UN Resolutions end. Per Ref B, we noted the possibility of a U.S.-Iraq Defense Cooperation Agreement (DCA) that could fold in third-nation contributors. Sevele said Tonga would have to see the text, but his instinct is that his Government would be comfortable continuing deployments under such an umbrella after the current UN umbrella ends. Tonga would not want to have to negotiate a separate bilateral agreement with Iraq or go without a formal arrangement. He said the issue of just what Tonga would need to do to approve a DCA arrangement and how long that could take can not be answered until the Tonga Government sees the actual DCA. Sevele's guess, sight unseen, is that such an agreement might not require parliamentary approval, so the process might be simple and short. All that said, Sevele reiterated his introductory point: in his view the visa issue needs addressing productively before the U.S. and Tonga move on to discuss further deployments and mechanisms for same.

Wharf-reconstruction project as a sweetener

13. (C) Sevele mentioned his suggestion in Honolulu that PACOM might illustrate USG appreciation for the current TDS deployments by assisting the Tonga Government to reconstruct the wharf in Nuku'alofa. He reported that PACOM and others took on the idea with interest, and he said he had invited U.S. military engineers to visit Nuku'alofa to get a first-hand perspective on such a project. While Sevele said he sees such a project as a way the USG can show tangible thanks to the Tongan public for deployments, he made clear he does not see such a project as a substitute for the visa resolution that remains at the top of his agenda.
DINGER